Press release

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High-flying balloonist presents innovation awards

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A Braille weather chart and a TV weather presentation system have both been short-listed for the Met Office's first Innovation Awards. Like many organisations, the Met Office realises that innovation is a key element in future success, so it will acknowledge the most innovative staff ideas at an awards ceremony on 6 March 2002. The awards will be presented by Colin Prescott who, later this year with co-pilot Andy Elson, will attempt to take a balloon to the edge of space, 25 miles above the earth.

The Met Office's Education team has worked closely with St Vincent's School for the Blind to develop a Braille version of a weather chart. Along with supporting material, it means that meteorology can now form part of the curriculum for blind children.

The TV presentation system will allow national met. services in developing countries to produce forecasts on TV. Reductions in the cost of these systems will enable the Met Office to help 10 African countries, up from just three in the previous year.

In all, there are 21 nominations across five separate categories. Winners will be selected by a panel of experts from across the Met Office, and staff will also have the chance to vote for their preferred innovation.

Dee Cotgrove, the Met Office's Innovation Manager, said: "Thriving, innovative organisations attach great importance to rewarding innovative ideas and creating a positive atmosphere where success breeds success. The Met Office Innovation awards do just that and will become an annual event. Colin's attempt on the balloon altitude record will rely on innovation and Met Office forecasts to succeed, so it's very fitting that he presents the awards."

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